

The Gulf of Mexico Alliance Diversity Project: Enhancing Local Capacity to Reach Underserved and Underrepresented Populations

Update: Organizations have been chosen and the May workshop is set. Please watch for the 2009 conference with results from the 2008 programs.

For more information about this project contact:
Shelley Sparks
Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program
shelley@btnep.org 985-447-0836 800-259-0869

This program is funded by a grant from EPA's Gulf of Mexico Program.

The Gulf of Mexico Alliance has identified the need to improve environmental education opportunities for underserved and underrepresented populations in the five states bordering the Gulf of Mexico. Hosted by the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program (BTNEP), the GOMA Diversity Project aims to establish a network of support for organizations within this region to strengthen their capacity to serve these populations and to encourage innovation and interaction among these groups and their members. The project topics will target water quality, eutrophication, gulf habitats, and coastal and wetland restoration.

These goals will be accomplished by:

- An introductory workgroup session to bring together a core group of leaders from communities and environmental organizations to participate in workshops and forums designed to identify and analyze examples of both successful and unsuccessful education and outreach programs, discuss challenges and opportunities, and plan specific activities for the coming year
- An eight-month mini-grant program to provide matching funds to help at least five groups who attend the introductory workgroup session to implement their plans
- A project website and discussion group through which participants can share their experiences, ask for help, and offer advice to others
- A follow-up symposium to share results of the funded projects and programs, identify and analyze what worked and what did not, and plan follow-up activities for the next year; this symposium will be open to the core workgroup plus a larger audience who is interested in learning from the core group's experiences

You can participate in the project in various ways, outlined below:

A. Introductory working group session: Scheduled for May 7-8, 2008. Session participants will develop into a core workgroup to help strengthen and diversify environmental education and outreach in the Gulf of Mexico. This session will be very hands-on and the agenda will be tailored to participants' goals. To be considered for participation, you must 1) either be part of an environmental organization looking to better serve diverse populations, or be part of a

community group looking to become more involved in environmental education; 2) come with a partner from either a community group (if you are with an environmental organization) or an environmental organization (if you are from a community group); 3) attend the entire 2-day workgroup session in Ocean Springs, MS; 4) agree to do some preparatory work before the meeting (some light introductory readings). Workgroup participants will be eligible to apply for mini-grant funds to help implement their project ideas.

B. Online List-Serv: The Gulf of Mexico Alliance maintains an environmental education list-serv, to which members may post information regarding events, projects, or news of interest to those in the environmental education field. By signing onto this service, you may receive a few emails each day (or each day's messages can be combined into a digest).

C. February 2009 Symposium: This symposium will highlight some of the victories and challenges the core group faced in implementing their project ideas since the introductory workgroup session and will be conducted in a conference-style format.